Extract from an Address to the people of the state of New-York, on the subject of the federal Constitution.

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Friends and Fellow-Citizens,

THERE are times and seasons when *general evils* spread general alarm and uneasiness, and yet arise from causes too complicated, and too little understood by many, to produce a unanimity of opinions respecting their remedies. Hence it is, that on such occasions, the conflict of arguments too often excites a conflict of passions, and introduces a degree of discord and animosity, which, by agitating the publick mind, dispose it to precipitation and extravagance. They who on the ocean have been unexpectedly inveloped with tempests, or suddenly entangled among rocks and shoals, know the value of that serene, self-possession and presence of mind, to which in such cases they owed their preservation: Nor will the heroes who have given us victory and peace, hesitate to acknowledge, that we are as much indebted for those blessings to calm precision and cool intrepidity which planned and conducted our military measures, as to the glowing animation with which they were executed.

While reason retains her rule, while men are as ready to receive as to give advice, and as willing to be convinced themselves, as to convince others, there are few political evils from which a free and enlightened people cannot deliver themselves. It is unquestionably true, that the great body of the people love their country, and with it prosperity; and this observation is particularly applicable to the people of a *free* country, for they have more and stronger reasons for loving it than others. It is not therefore to vicious motives that the unhappy divisions which sometimes prevail among them are to be imputed; the people at large always mean well, and although they may, on certain occasions, be misled by

counsels, or injured by the efforts of the few who expect more advantage from the wreck, than from the preservation of national prosperity, yet the motives of these few, are by no means to be confounded with those of the community in general.

That such seeds of discord and danger have been disseminated and begin to take root in America, as unless eradicated will soon poison our gardens and our fields, is a truth much to be lamented; and the more so, as their growth rapidly encreases, while we are wasting the season in honesty but imprudently disputing, not whether they should be pulled up, but by whom, in what manner, and with what instruments the work shall be done.

When the King of Great-Britain, misguided by men who did not merit his confidence, asserted the unjust claim of binding us in all cases whatsoever, and prepared to obtain our submission by force, the object which engrossed our attention, however important, was nevertheless plain and simple. "What shall we do?" was the question--the people answered, let us write our counsels and our arms. They sent delegates to Congress, and soldiers to the field. Confiding in the probity and wisdom of Congress, they received their recommendations as if they had been laws; and that ready acquiescence in their advice enabled those patriots to save their country. Then there was little leisure or disposition for controversy respecting the expediency of measures--hostile fleets soon filled our ports, and hostile armies spread desolation on our shores. Union was then considered as the most essential of human meals, and we almost worshipped it with as much fervor, as Pagans in distress formerly implored the protection of their tutelar deities. That Union was the child of wisdom--Heaven blessed it, and it wrought out our political salvation.

That glorious war was succeeded by an advantageous peace. When danger disappeared, ease, tranquility, and a sense of security loosened the bands of union; and Congress and soldiers and good faith depreciated with their apparent importance. Recommendations lost their influence, and requisitions were rendered nugatory, not by their want of propriety, but by their want of power. The spirit of private gain expelled the spirit of publick good, and men became more intent on the means of enriching and aggrandizing themselves, than

of enriching and aggrandizing their country. Hence the war-worn veteran, whose reward for toils and wounds existed in written promises, found Congress without the means, and too many of the States without the disposition to do him justice. Hard necessity compelled him, and others under similar circumstances, to sell their honest claims on the publick for a little bread; and thus unmerited misfortunes and patriotick distresses became articles of speculation and commerce.

These and many other evils, too well known to require enumeration, imperceptibly stole in upon us, and acquired an unhappy influence on our publick affairs. But such evils, like the worst of weeds, will naturally spring up in so rich a soil; and a good government is as necessary to subdue the one, as an attentive gardener or husbandman is to destroy the other--even the Garden of Paradise required to be dressed, and while men continue to be constantly impelled to errour and to wrong, by innumerable circumstances and temptations, so long will society experience the unceasing necessity of government.

It is a pity that the expectations which actuated the authors of the existing Confederation, neither have nor can be realized:--Accustomed to see and admire the glorious spirit which moved all ranks of people in the most gloomy moments of the war, observing their steadfast attention to union, and the wisdom they so often manifested both in choosing and confiding in their rulers, those gentlemen were led to flatter themselves that the people of America only required to know what ought to be done, to do it. This amiable mistake induced them to institute a national government in such a manner, as though very fit to give advice, was yet destitute of power, and so constructed as to be very unfit to be trusted with it. They seem not to have been sensible that mere advice is a sad substitute for laws; nor to have recollected that the advice even of the all-wise and best of beings, has been always disregarded by a great majority of all the men that ever lived.

Experience is a severe preceptor, but it teaches useful truths, and however harsh, is always honest--be calm and dispassionate, and listen to what it tells us.

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Prior to the revolution we had little occasion to inquire or know much about national affairs, for although they existed and were managed, yet they were managed *for* us, but not *by* us. Intent on our domestick concerns, our internal legislative business, our agriculture, and our buying and selling, we were seldom anxious about what passed or was doing in foreign Courts. As we had nothing to do with that department of policy, so the affairs of it were not detailed to us, and we took as little pains to inform ourselves, as others did to inform us of them. War, and peace, alliances and treaties, and commerce, and navigation, were conducted and regulated without our advice or controul. While we had liberty and justice, and in security enjoyed the fruits of our "vine and fig tree," we were in general too content and too much occupied, to be at the trouble of investigating the various political combinations in this department, or to examine and perceive how exceedingly important they often were to the advancement and protection of our prosperity. This habit and turn of thinking affords one reason why so much more care was taken, and so much more wisdom displayed, in forming our State governments, than in forming our federal or national one.

By the Confederation as it now stands, the direction of general and national affairs is committed to a single body of men, viz. The Congress. They may make war, but are not empowered to raise men or money to carry it on--they may make peace, but without power to see the terms of it observed--they may form alliances, but without ability to comply with the stipulations on their part--they may enter into treaties of commerce, but without power to inforce them at home or abroad--they may borrow money, but without having the means of repayment--they may partly regulate commerce, but without authority to execute their ordinance--they may appoint ministers and other officers of trust, but without power to try or punish them for misdemeanours--they may resolve, but cannot execute either with dispatch or with secrecy.--In short, they may consult, and deliberate, and recommend, and make requisitions, and they who please may regard them.

From this new and wonderful system of government, it has come to pass, that almost every national object of every kind, is at this day unprovided for; and other nations taking the advantage of its imbecility, are daily multiplying commercial restraints upon us. Our fur trade is gone to Canada, and British garrisons keep; the keys of it. Our ship yards have almost ceased to disturb the repose of the neighbourhood by the noise of the axe and the hammer; and while foreign flags fly triumphantly above our highest houses, the American stars seldom do more than shed a few feeble rays about the humbler masts of river sloops and coasting schooners. The greater part of our hardy seamen are plowing the ocean in foreign pay, and not a few of our ingenious shipwrights are now building vessels on alien shores. Although our increasing agriculture and industry extend and multiply our productions, yet they constantly diminish in value; and although we permit all nations to fill our country with their merchandizes, yet their best markets are shut against us. Is there an English, or a French, or a Spanish island in the West-Indies to which an American vessel can carry a cargo of flour for sale? Not one. The Algerines exclude us from the Mediterranean, and adjacent countries; and we are neither able to purchase, nor to command the free use of those seas. Can our little towns or larger cities consume the immense productions of our fertile country? Or will they without trade be able to pay a good price for the proportion which they do consume? The last season gave a very unequivocal answer to those questions--What numbers of fine cattle have returned from this city to the country for want of buyers? What great quantities of salted and other provisions still lay useless in the stores? To how much below the former price, is our corn and wheat and flour and lumber rapidly falling? Our debts remain undiminished, and the interest on them accumulating--our credit abroad is nearly extinguished, and at home unrestored--they who had money have sent it beyond the reach of our laws, and scarcely any man can borrow of his neighbour. Nay, does not experience also tell us, that it is as difficult to pay as to borrow? That even our houses and lands cannot command money--that law suits and usurious contracts abound--that our farms fell on executions

for less than half their value, and that distress in various forms, and in various ways, is approaching fast to the doors of our best citizen.

A Sermon on The Slave Trade, concluded from our last

SOME will say how shall we get sugar, and the other products of the West-India islands, now raised by slaves, if slavery be abolished. I answer, our first care should be to *do justice,* and *shew mercy,* let what will become of the superfluities, or even the necessaries of life. But I would ask, how did we do before we have brought ourselves into this unnatural situation? There was then no want of sugar, or of some substitute for it, though the use of this luxury was not then so common. Let every thing for the use of man be raised by men, who shall be paid the full price of their labour, and let those who cannot pay that price go without it, as they do with respect to other things.

Besides, it is demonstrable that we may have sugar, and every other commodity that we now raise by means of slaves, even cheaper without slaves; either by encouraging the culture of them in Africa and other suitable climates* , and purchasing them there with our own proper commodities (without the expense of setting and defending plantations of our own) or even by the labour of freeman in those plantations. Abolish slavery and the labour now performed by slaves will not be considered as disgraceful.

* *Mr. Osborne, who was employed in the negociation of the late peace, assured me, that sugar might be raised in Africa, by the labour of free Negroes, and be sold in London, at one-half the price that we now give for it; but that it would be necessary to secure the favour of the chiefs by presents from government. He had had a plantation of his own in that country, on which he employed, as nearly as I can remember, three hundred Negroes.*

It is said that the Quakers, who from the purest principles of humanity and christianity manumitted their slaves, found, ever to their surprize, that they gained more by their service as freemen, when they paid them wages, than they did by them as slaves, when they gave them no wages at all; the Negroes laboured so much more cheerfully and did so much more work, when freemen than when slaves.

At all events, let servitude be abolished, and leave it to the ingenuity and industry of our countrymen to find a substitute for it. When things are brought into a complex and unnatural state, it is not easy to revert to that which is proper and natural: But in time it will be done. And perhaps the immediate emancipation of all slaves would be an improper, because in fact no humane measure. Those who have been long slaves would not know how to make a proper use of freedom. But if a stop was put to the farther importation of slaves, it would immediately become the interest of the masters to make the most of their present stock, and consequently to treat their slaves with more humanity; so that in time their condition would be the same with that of the *villeins* in the Feudal times of this country; and by degrees approach to that of *freemen.* Or freedom might be placed within the reach of the more industrious of the slaves, as it is with the Spaniards and French; and the man who shall have worked himself free would know how to make a proper use of his freedom, and would be prepared to make a valuable member of society. However, to take the most prudent measures in the case must be left to the wisdom of parliament. Ours is to express our good wishes in the cause, and by our zeal to excite them to do what they shall deem the most proper.

What is proposed to be done by England is already done in Virginia, Delaware, and Rhode-Island+ , and it is likely to take place in all the States of America.++ It will be an honour to this country, and the most glorious event in the present reign, if the example should be followed here. It will be honourable to every person in proportion to the share he shall have in bringing it about. But in this we must all give place to the Quakers, who were the first to shew themselves friends to the rights of humanity; and what is more, who were the first to decline any advantage which they, in common with others, might have derived from this inhuman traffick with out own species.

+ *To which may be added Pennsylvania, Massachusetts--and we believe all the other States, except Georgia, and the Carolinas.* ++ *One of the North American provinces, as they then were (I think it was New-York) some time before the commencement of the American war, passed a law against the importation of slaves, but on account of the opposition made to it by some merchants in England, it was not confirmed in the Privy*

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Council of this country. Shall we say that the government which have slaves does not deserve to have subjects?

With Englishmen I may be allowed to argue from that *love of liberty* by which they profess to be actuated. For surely we are not such selfish beings, as to wish to engross every thing valuable. If we have any sentiments of benevolence, or sense of common equity, we shall wish to see every thing extended to others that we covet for ourselves. As we Englishmen, then, would least brook the condition of the Negroes in our plantations, we ought to have the most compassion for them, and, remote as they are from us in situation and condition, we should consider them as brethren and neighbours, and therefore exert ourselves to the utmost for their relief.

Englishmen are also no less renowned for their *generosity* than for their love of liberty. Our charities, for every describable human want, are far more numerous than those of any other nations in the world. They have often been extended to strangers as well as to natives. Let the same principle operate on this occasion, than which none can more loudly call for it. If those be the most proper objects of generosity who stand in the most need of it (and according to my text we should consider ourselves as *neighbours* to all those to whom we have an opportunity of acting a neighbourly or friendly part) none can stand to us in that relation more nearly than the wretched Negroes; no part of the human race suffering more, or more unjustly; or who have it less in their power to help themselves. As their complaints cannot even be heard by those who have the power to relieve them, and they are, indeed, utterly ignorant of the existence of any such power on earth, *we* should